



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor James L. Streeter, Councilors Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Paulann H. Sheets, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, January 11, 2011

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Streeter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Streeter, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Watson

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. Calendar and Communications

None

4. Approval of Minutes (None)

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2010-0153 Sales Tax on Commercial Solid Waste Collection

A motion was made by Mayor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Sheets, that the members of the Town Council, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo, and Town Attorney Bryan Fiengo go into executive session at 7:02 p.m. for the purpose of discussing pending litigation strategy with respect to the imposition of state sales tax on the Town's provision of solid waste collection services to commercial establishments within the Town of Groton and the liability associated therewith.

The motion carried unanimously

Recommended for a Resolution

The executive session concluded at 7:48 p.m.

Mayor Streeter provided an overview of the subject of the executive session discussion.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that the Town pay the invoice to avoid any additional interest paid from the solid waste fund, and to not bill the commercial solid waste users for the sales tax pertaining to the audit period which was prior to October 2010, and further that the Town pursue filing an appeal with the Department of Revenue Services to resolve the initial question of whether the commercial trash should be taxed by the Town, and that this item be referred to RTM.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0271 Agreement with Stonington Ambulance Corps, Inc.

Discussed

Attorney Bryan Fiengo explained this is an agreement between the Town's Emergency Communications Center and Stonington Ambulance Corporation, a private non-profit entity, not a municipality. The Town has been providing dispatching services to the group for a number of years and this proposal will put the oral agreement in writing. The term of the agreement is three

years at \$5,000 per year, with the ability to extend the agreement by one year periods. Termination requires 90 days notice. Rate increases will be based on the Consumer Price Index. No changes are proposed to the service. Mr. Fiengo noted that the agreement includes an indemnification clause protecting the Town and a dispute resolution provision. The fee is based on number of calls.

A motion was made by Councilor Monteiro, seconded by Councilor Watson, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0241 Probate Court Update

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Regional Probate Court has been established. Some modifications have been made to the space occupied by the Groton Probate Court and previously occupied by the Registrar of Voters area. The Registrar has moved to the Human Services Building. Mayor Streeter questioned the formula for charges to be levied on other towns. The Town Manager is working on developing a budget. For the current years, towns budgeted what they have in the past in anticipation of developing a formula. It is expected that other towns will pay their fair share to support the court. Options include a formula based on population or by grand list, or the state will consider other options. The formula does not have to be permanent and the Town Manager would recommend a population based formula. The towns are only responsible for a small portion of the court costs; most costs are paid by the state. The Town Manager noted the charges must also capture the cost of using the space, which is a fairly significant amount of space in Town Hall. The charges also need to factor in a reasonable amount of compensation for maintenance and utilities. The consensus of the Council was to use a per capita basis for calculating the towns' share of the Regional Probate Court costs.

A motion was made by Mayor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0124 Review of Town Council Goals

Not Discussed

Mayor Streeter suggested that discussion of this item be tabled to the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

2011-0012 Power Outages in Noank

Discussed

This referral was made in response to a concern expressed by Attorney Falvey. Joe Sastre, the Director of Emergency Operations, has provided information about the Town's experience at the Public Works complex. Power outages are also a problem in downtown Mystic. The Town is working on the issue and will provide an update. Councilor Sheets noted that state statutes provide authority for towns to set up their own energy district. She asked if it would be possible to expand Groton Utilities' service area and if CL&P is aware of the community's concerns. The Town Manager stated that there have been longstanding and well-documented discussions with CL&P regarding the Town's issues. Mayor Streeter expressed support for notifying "higher ups" at CL&P of the Town's problems. The Town Manager suggested that the issue must first be defined.

2011-0014 Groton Housing Authority Annual Report

Discussed

The Council received a letter and annual report from Mike Myer, Chairman of the Groton Housing Authority. Mr. Myer would like to meet with the Council in person, and the consensus was to invite Mr. Myer and the Housing Authority to a future meeting.

2010-0172 FYE 2012 Budget

Discussed

The Town Manager suggested that the pre-budget public hearing be held at the second regular meeting in February so that the governor's budget is available, and the Council agreed.

Councilor Peruzzotti asked about the results of the budget brainstorming session that was held on Saturday, October 16th. The Town Manager noted that the Council should indicate how they would like to follow up on that meeting. Mayor Streeter noted that some of the issues are being considered by David Dunn who was recently hired by the Town to conduct a management study. Mayor Streeter indicated he would generate a list of the suggestions for distribution to the Council.

Councilor Flax asked if an e-mail could be sent to the department heads asking for a list of the services they provide. The Town Manager explained that the cost center descriptions in the budget are the most useful description of the services provided. Councilor Flax stated that he needs a list and associated cost to determine the value of the service. Councilor Watson noted that the revenue side is also an important component.

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor O'Beirne was discussing the referendum with the Registrar and he requested the approximate cost of the referendum to the Town. The information will be available before the public hearing.

With respect to the location of next week's meeting that includes three public hearing, the Town Manager noted that he spoke to the bond attorney and there is no problem associated with changing the venue. The Senior Center is available. The bond attorney suggested placing a block ad announcing the relocation. The Council concurred with moving the meeting.

The Mayor noted that he will be developing a list of appointments for the Sister Cities Committee. Councilor Johnson has already volunteered.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Watson, to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.